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Presentation to Travel &  
Transportation SPC

20<sup>th</sup> April 2021

**Walkability  
Assessment:**  
*Three Bridges*

**Limerick  
Pedestrian  
Network**

This is the first Walkability Assessment prepared by the Limerick Pedestrian Network. The LPN is a newly formed group of local volunteers. We want to make Limerick better for, and because of, everyday walking.

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# Three Bridges Report - Update & Context

- Original Report – August 2020
- Developments in Covid measures (end of 2020 temporary measures, unclear what plans for 2021)
- Allocation of URDF and other funding packages
- Increased popularity of the Three Bridges Walk
- Further assessments planned in other locations, we're seeking avenues of engagement with LCCC



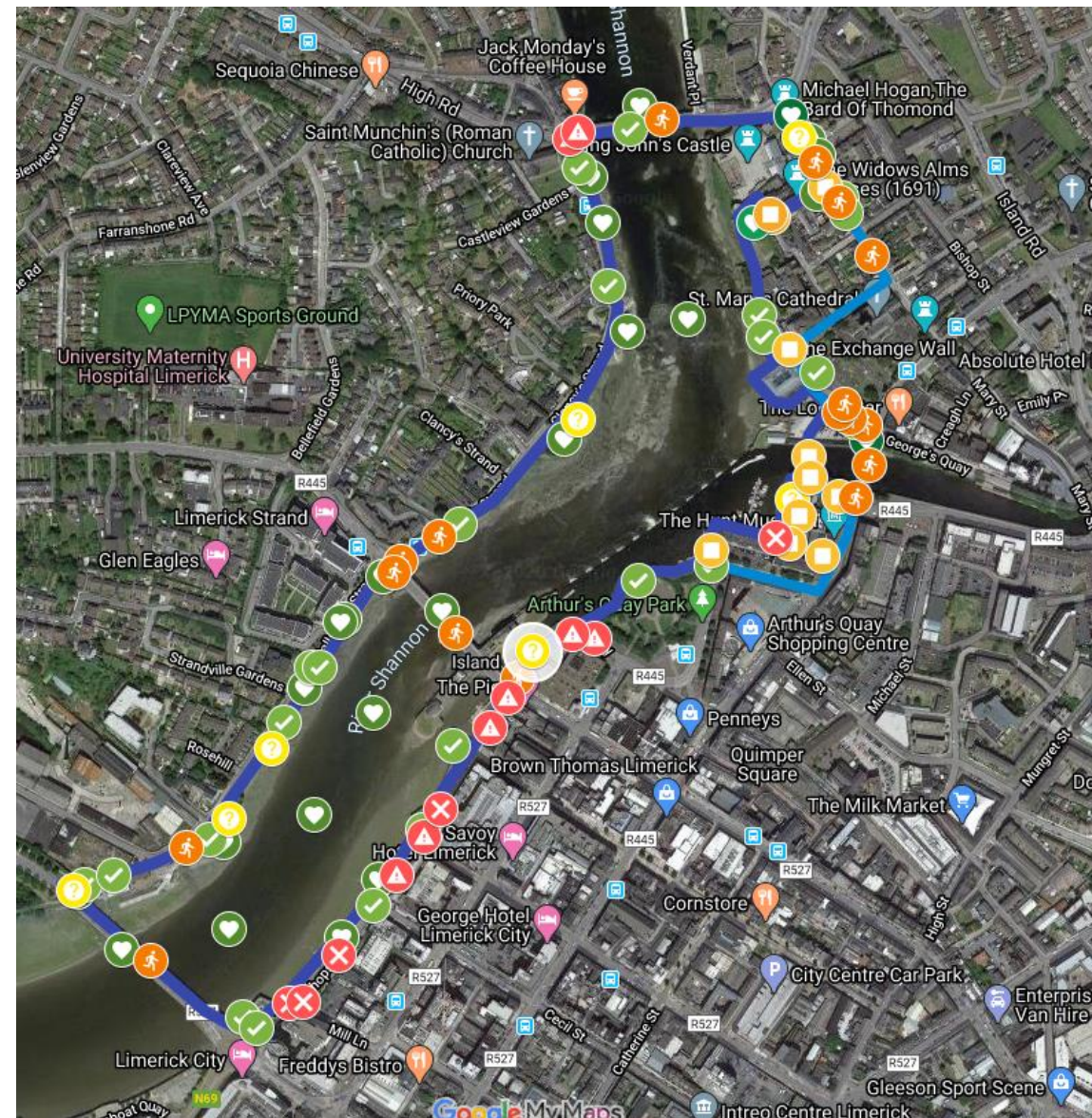


# Context of the 2020 Report

- #WeNeedSpace
- Wide Community Engagement
- Short term quick(ish) fixes for significant improvements in public realm, pedestrian safety, amenity access, and Covid-related health measures



# The Work of the Report



# Findings

## Overview of Findings

Overall, the Three Bridges route displays predominantly positive features from a pedestrian perspective. It shows the overwhelmingly positive results of investment, development, and maintenance of public amenities. While the three bridges walk is probably the finest example of pedestrian infrastructure in the city centre, there are a number of areas where improvements can be made to enhance pedestrian experience.

Positive Observations	Areas for Improvement
<b>Wide footpaths</b> and boardwalks with adequate space to cater for pedestrian volumes	<b>Excessively long wait time</b> for pedestrian crossing at Sarsfield Bridge
<b>Resting areas</b> with seating, greenery, pleasant views provide areas for pedestrians to catch their breath and take in the breathtaking views	<b>Lack of space allocation for pedestrians at pinch points</b> e.g. the bridges, Potato Market
<b>Low traffic volume / speed</b> on the quays, with traffic calming measures designed into the street layout	<b>Lack of pedestrian priority</b> at crossing points
<b>Connection to the river maintained</b> with access to old slipways and quay steps retained	<b>Shared Space on Howleys Quay</b> is not a safe space for pedestrians
<b>Connection to history maintained</b> via sculptures, information boards, original features of docks	<b>100m section from Sarsfield Bridge underpass to Arthur's Quay Park</b> is a break in the chain of the route and represents a safety risk
For the most part, <b>ramp access provided</b> for wheelchair / buggy / mobility aid users	<b>Opening times of the many gates providing access to 'Riverside Walk'</b> not signposted and unreliable
<b>Riverside Walk is a fantastic section</b> of the walk as it is entirely separated from traffic	Number of areas where <b>disabled access is not provided</b> for wheelchair / buggy / mobility scooter users
<b>Raised pedestrian crossings</b> on O' Callaghan Strand	<b>Unsafe zebra crossing</b> at Thomond Bridge
<b>Physical protection from illegal footpath parking</b>	<b>Street clutter restricting pedestrian space</b> (already limited) even further e.g. poles situated in footpath

# Recommendations

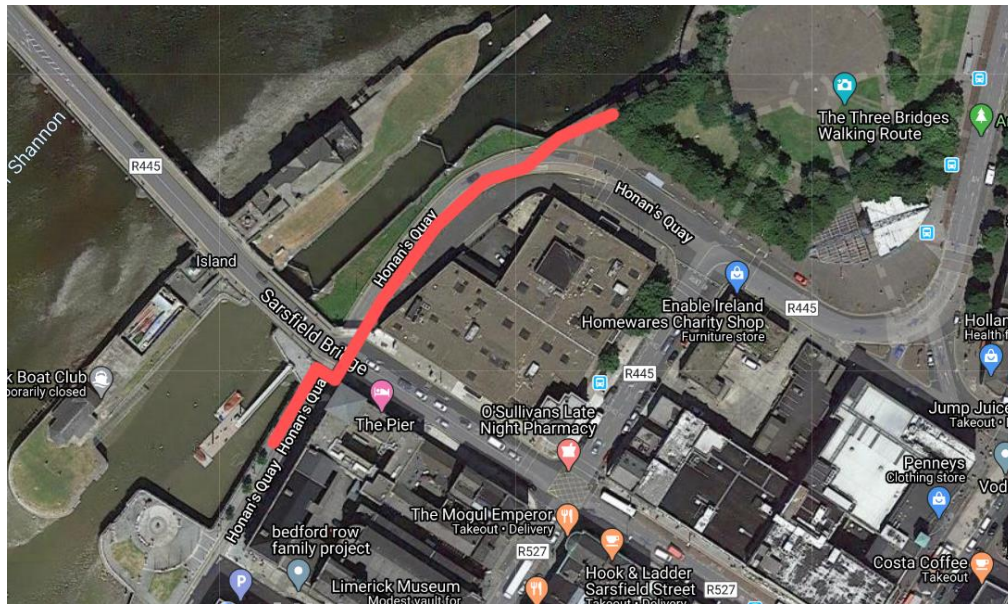
This table provides a summary of the key recommendations. Further detail on each recommendation and the associated observations can be found in the pages that follow.

<b>RECOMMENDATION 1:</b>  <i>Provide Safe &amp; Continuous Pedestrian Route between Sarsfield Bridge &amp; Arthurs Quay Park</i>	<b>1A</b> - Fix the <b>pedestrian lights</b>
	<b>1B</b> - Two raised <b>pedestrian crossings</b>
	<b>1C</b> - 100m of <b>new footpath</b> on both sides of road
	<b>1D</b> - <b>Realign carriageway</b> (chicane)
	<b>1E</b> - As alternative to 1A – 1D, <b>remove through-traffic</b> from South Quays to create pedestrian zone. See Recommendation 3 for more detail
<b>RECOMMENDATION 2:</b>  <i>Improve Pedestrian Space Allocation &amp; Safety on the (4) Bridges</i>	<b>2A</b> - All 4 Bridges - <b>widen the footpaths</b>
	<b>2B</b> - Thomond Bridge - Improve safety of <b>existing zebra crossing</b> on bridge
	<b>2C</b> - Thomond Bridge - <b>new zebra crossing</b> on Clancy Strand arm of junction with bridge
	<b>2D</b> - Matthew Bridge - <b>remove pinch point</b>
	<b>2E</b> - Sarsfield Bridge - provide <b>shorter pedestrian wait time</b> at the lights
<b>RECOMMENDATION 3:</b>  <i>Reshape 'Shared Space' on South Quays as Pedestrian Space</i>	<b>3A</b> - <b>Pedestrianise a section of the South Quays</b> , creating a people friendly space. Access to Q-Park Harveys Quay maintained via Bedford Row.
<b>RECOMMENDATION 4:</b>  <i>Improve Pedestrian Space at Potato Market / Merchants Quay</i>	<b>4A</b> - Short-term - <b>Improve existing pedestrian space</b> i.e. widen footpaths, remove obstructions
	<b>4B</b> - Long-term - repurpose area as a <b>pedestrian and tourist friendly public plaza</b>
<b>RECOMMENDATION 5:</b>  <i>Deliver Consistent Riverside Walk Opening Times</i>	<b>5A</b> - Agree and <b>publish opening times</b> for the Riverside Walk and provide information signage
	<b>5B</b> - Provide <b>general signage</b> for Three Bridges Walk, including detours
	<b>5C</b> - Address the <b>accessibility issues</b> on the route



# 1. Provide Safe & Continuous Pedestrian Route between Sarsfield Bridge & Arthurs Quay Park

This 100 – 200m stretch between Sarsfield Bridge and Arthur's Quay Park is the weakest link in the Three Bridges chain. The continuity of the walk is interrupted, requiring the pedestrian to execute two unassisted road crossings in order to continue on the Three Bridges route.





## OBSERVATIONS:

**Absence of Safe Crossing Point (1)** - There is no footpath under Sarsfield Bridge on the river side so pedestrians must (and we have observed pedestrians doing so) cross the road without any way of stopping traffic. Likewise there are no drop kerbs to facilitate wheelchair users.



**Clear Priority for Motor Traffic** - Approaching the Sarsfield Bright underpass, there is clear priority for cars. Arrows painted on the road encourage motorists to go faster, which they do. All the 'caution' signage is aimed at protecting the bridge and vehicles. There is no signage or visual signals to warn drivers of damaging pedestrians. While the relatively narrow carriageway width acts to slow speed slightly, cars get a straight and unobstructed path under the bridge, whereas pedestrians must cross the road with no drop kerbs or zebra crossing to help.



**Absence of Footpath on River Side** - There is room on the left here for a pedestrian pathway on the river side to provide a continuous and safe link from the quays to Arthur's Quay Park. Installing a pathway here would very much alleviate the current problem where pedestrians have to negotiate a narrow path before looping back into the park.





**Absence of Safe Crossing Point (2)** - Away from the traffic lights, the beginning of the path on the Arthur's Quay Park side offers a dropped kerb but there is no corresponding dropped kerb on the other side of the street.



**Defective Pedestrian Signals** - The traffic lights across Honan's Quay to Arthur's Quay Park are confusing and dangerous for the pedestrian. As half of the road has been blocked off for years as part of the old Dunnes site, a pedestrian coming from the quays finds themselves on the centre median, where there is no pedestrian crossing button. To access the button, they have to cross half of the street, press the button, and then return to the centre median. Neither pedestrian crossing button appears to be working to summon a green man. Fault verified numerous times, waiting for 10 minutes each time with no success.



## RECOMMENDATIONS:

- In the immediate term, **fix the pedestrian lights** between Honan's Quay and Arthur's Quay
- Provision of two **raised pedestrian crossings** (one quayside and one between Honan's Quay and Arthur's Quay Park)
- Provision of c. **100m of new footpath** on both sides between Sarsfield Bridge and Arthurs Quay Park.
- Slight **realignment (chicane) of the road** approaching Sarsfield Bridge to reduce the speed of motor traffic travelling under the bridge
- While the above recommendations assume the retention of the existing road use and are 'incremental' in nature, Limerick Pedestrian Network recommends a more fundamental change to the road use in this area, namely **removing through-traffic from the South Quays** to provide a truly pedestrian priority zone. See Recommendation no. 3 for further detail.



## 4. Improve Pedestrian Space at Potato Market / Merchants Quay

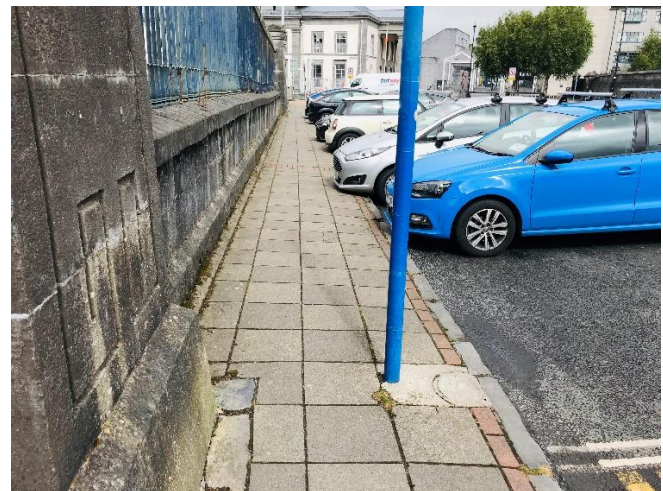
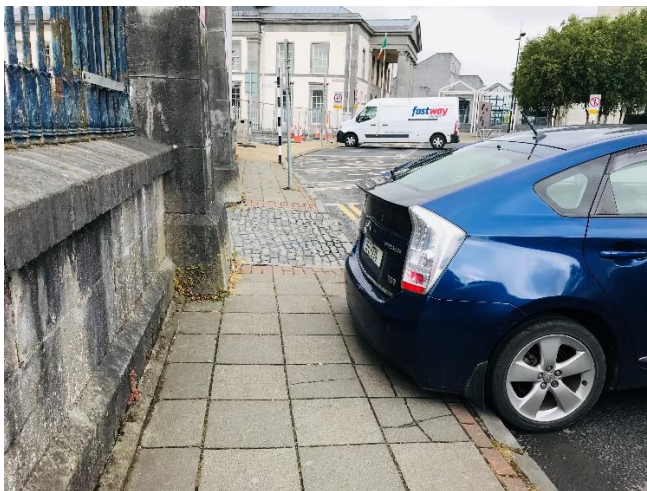
Very little space is provided in this area for pedestrians, and that which is provided is cluttered with poles and other infrastructure, including encroachment by parked cars. More generally, the function of the space as a road and car park underutilizes what could be repurposed as a fantastic public plaza.

### OBSERVATIONS:

- **Allocation of Pedestrian Space is Abysmal** - There is an abundance of space in this area but only a tiny fraction is allocated for pedestrians.
- **Pedestrian Space is Cluttered and Restricted** - What little space that is allocated for pedestrian use is cluttered with signage and infrastructure for the benefit of motorists.
  - Poles located in footpath:



- Noses / tails of parked cars encroach on footpath space:



- EV charging terminal located in footpath:





- **Overall Space is Underutilised** - The area (bounded by the Potato Market, the old Courthouse, City Hall and St Mary's Cathedral) is used as a car / coach park when it could be a public plaza serving as a hub for the Three Bridges Walk and linking to the Medieval Quarter and other tourist attractions in the city.



## RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Short-term: Improve Existing Footpaths**
  - Increase footpath widths
  - Relocate poles from footpath space
  - Relocate EV charging terminal from footpath
  - Install measures to prevent encroachment of parked cars on footpath
- **Long Term: Repurpose Area as a Public Plaza**
  - Repurpose the entire area into a public plaza



## 5. Deliver Consistent Riverside Walk Opening Times

The 'Riverside Walk' is the section of the Three Bridges Walk between Arthur's Quay Park and King John's Castle. It is the safest section of the walk insofar as it is completely separated from motor traffic. It is also arguably the most scenic portion of the walk with great views of King John's Castle, the Curragower Falls and the city itself.

However, access to the area is by way of as many as 12 gates, the opening /closing times of which are a mystery to the average punter. It is not uncommon to proceed through a number of open gates before encountering a locked gate, at which point the walker must retrace their steps.

Clarity and consistency of opening times of this section of the walk is required to maximise the benefit of what is a fantastic resource in the heart of our city.

### OBSERVATIONS:

- **Uncertain Opening Times** - There are as many as 12 access points (gates) to the Riverside Walk, but no information signs on the gates stating opening and closing times, as you would see in public parks
- Neither does there appear to be coordination of the opening and closing of the various gates. This results in people either avoiding the route (taking a detour) or having to retrace their steps when they encounter a locked gate.
- Many people local to Limerick are at least aware that the gates are closed at variable times but, without information signs, it is ridiculously confusing for tourists intent on taking Limerick's flagship walk. We have all met tourists turning back from a locked gate assuming their walk is over





- **Access for All** - There are a number of points where the Riverside Walk (and by extension the Three Bridges Walk) is inaccessible to wheelchair users.
- Two such areas are a) at the back of Sarsfield House, and b) at the Widows' Alms Houses (see below).



- **General Signage for Riverside Walk & Three Bridges Walk** - One of the oddities of the Three Bridges Walk, compared to similar walks in other cities, is that informational and directional signage on the walk itself is almost non-existent.
  - There's excellent information available on Limerick Council's webpage and there are some remaining orphaned signs from when the walk was launched as a Slí na Sláinte some years back but signage is sporadic and difficult to find. It's almost as though we're trying to keep it a secret from outsiders.
  - Somewhat ironically, there are a good number of signs signalling the Riverside Walk but, as mentioned in previous observations, they often point at locked gates with little in the way of explanation. In contrast, those sections of the Three Bridges Walk that are permanently open appear to have no signage whatsoever.





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## RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Agree Riverside Walk Opening Times & Provide Information Signage**
  - We suggest that information signs be placed at each access point to advise the public of the opening times, as is common in public parks around the city and county.
  - We understand that the various gates are the responsibility of different local groups / bodies (e.g. Hunt Museum, Milk Market Trustees etc.). We suggest that Limerick Council lead a coordination exercise to agree a fixed (with seasonal variation) schedule of opening times for the entire route.
  - Once agreed, it is important that Limerick Council maintains regular dialogue with the various groups so that consistency of opening hours is maintained in practice (and amended over time if required)
- **Provide General Signage for Three Bridges Walk:**
  - As an extension of the above recommendation, we suggest that directional arrows be placed around the route to give tourists confidence that they are following the correct route.
  - Signage denoting an 'alternative' route should be provided to direct the public when the Riverside Walk gates are closed.
- **Address the Wheelchair Accessibility Issues**
  - Consider options to facilitate wheelchair access at the points highlighted.
  - In the interim, place signage at access points to the Riverside Walk advising the public that sections of the walk ahead are inaccessible to wheelchair users and advising an alternative route

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# Conclusions

We are very proud of the Three Bridges Walk, of the many ways it showcases the best of Limerick city. This auditing project has been an attempt by the Limerick Pedestrian Network to engage deeply with the route, bringing to bear our knowledge of best practice pedestrian infrastructure with the aim of driving immediate and lasting improvement for all who walk the Bridges. We are determined to highlight the tremendous potential of the route and to advocate for its development as the primary walking amenity in Limerick city.

## The Assessment Identified Mostly Positive Features

The Three Bridges Walk is overwhelmingly positive from a walkability perspective and LPN would like to see the positive features identified here implemented more generally across the city and county.

## The Assessment Also Identified a Substantial Number of Negative Features

Despite the many positives, the assessment also identified a substantial number of that need to be addressed. Given that the Three Bridges Walk has benefited from the aforementioned careful and deliberate investment and design, it is noted that the likely balance of positive vs. negative pedestrian features on other walking routes across the city will be less flattering.

## The Three Bridges Walk Can Be an Exemplar for Walkability in Limerick

The positive features of the Three Bridges Walk can be used as an exemplar which highlights what is possible when pedestrian needs are prioritised.

Likewise, by rectifying the negative issues highlighted in this report, the Three Bridges Walk can also be an exemplar in highlighting how existing challenges can be addressed effectively to provide even better pedestrian infrastructure across the city and county.

## Intentional Planning, Design & Investment Pays Off

Thoughtful and considered vision, planning and design (along with the associated investment) has resulted in a city centre walking route where pedestrians have been put to the forefront along this route. This proves that walkable routes can be provided (and co-exist with the provision of effective public and private motor traffic routes). Limerick Pedestrian Network would like to work together with Limerick Council to deliver improvements to the walkability of our city and county.

Contact: [pedestrianLK@gmail.com](mailto:pedestrianLK@gmail.com)



Thank you

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**Limerick  
Pedestrian  
Network**